


The
Zi-ka-wei
Orphanage



D. J. KAVANAGH, S. J.





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FOREWORD

Visitors to the Panama-Pacific International Exposition pause longer than usual when they reach the northwest corner of the Palace of Education. Here they find themselves in a very forest of miniature Chinese pagodas, surrounded on all sides by an immense variety of statues, paintings, wood-carved furniture, teak-wood chests, camphor boxes, antique lacquer screens, century-old temple gongs, artistically mounted, and a profusion of wood-carvings that for delicacy of touch and microscopic detail, have no rival in the entire Exposition. "What is this?" the visitor asks and on being informed that it is an exhibit sent to the Exposition by the orphans of Zi-ka-wei, his wonder grows and further information is sought concerning the orphans and the training which they receive under the direction of the Jesuit Missionaries.

This little pamphlet, the first of a series of similar sketches, has been prepared to supply the often-sought-for information. In subsequent pamphlets it is intended to cover the whole ground of Catholic Missionary work in China.

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Palace of Education,
Exposition Grounds.

THE ZI-KA-WEI ORPHANAGE

Zi-ka-wei,—a flourishing little town on the outskirts of Shanghai and connected with the latter place by electric cars—is, in the opinion of many, one of the most interesting spots in the whole of China. Scarcely anyone ever goes to Shanghai, without being told on all sides and by all classes of men, that “he must take a run out to Zi-ka-wei.” If he is a scientist, he will find there the famous zoological and botanical museums which contain a truly marvelous and complete collection of all the flora and fauna of the entire Orient. If he is an astronomer, his interest will be aroused by the fact that it is the site of an astronomical observatory that ranks with those of Tokyo and Manila by reason of the services rendered to astronomical science and more especially by reason of its historical connection with the first efforts made towards the Christianization of the Chinese, by Ricci, Schall and Verbiest, the eminent Jesuit scientists of the Seventeenth Century. If the visitor is interested in the study of seismic phenomena, Zi-ka-wei will appeal to him still more forcibly; for there is installed a seismographical plant, that is in direct telegraphic communication with all similar institu-

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tions throughout the world. Sea captains consult the Jesuit Fathers in charge of the weather bureau before they entrust themselves to the perils of the deep. Many a seafarer and many a precious cargo have been saved from destruction by the accurate prediction of date and path of impending storms. Students of Chinese history and of Chinese literature visit the institution to verify, if for no other reason, the report that the Jesuit library, in the distant Orient, contains over 100,000 volumes and that among these there are the most precious works extant in Chinese language. Students of art and architecture,—which, it may be noted in passing, are the most fascinating elements that enter into the strange composition of Oriental life,—find at Zi-ka-wei sufficient material to study these subjects in all their vastness and in all their luxury of detail. Interesting beyond expression, in this regard, is the unique collection of Chinese pagodas that have been restored in exact proportions by the orphan boys of Zi-ka-wei under the direction of Brother Beck, S. J. We shall return to the subject of pagodas later on in the course of this sketch.

Apart from these objects of scientific and secular interest, Zi-ka-wei affords an excellent opportunity to study missionary work at its

highest point of efficiency. The college, in charge of the Jesuit Fathers has more than 400 students, Christians and non-Christians. The students enter the institution for the educational advantages which it affords and incidentally they learn more about the Christian faith, if they are already Christians, while, if they are not Christians, they lose their native prejudices and misgivings and acquire a great amount of respect for the men who have traveled around the world to win the Chinese to God through the religion of Christ and His Church. Education is of incalculable advantage in the spread of Christianity among a race as intellectual as the Chinese.

Besides the college proper there is at Zi-ka-wei an ecclesiastical seminary founded for the purpose of training Chinese youths who wish to enter the ranks of the priesthood. At the present writing there are more than 75 seminarians engaged in the higher studies of Letters, Philosophy and Divinity. These young men who feel the call of God to the priesthood are characterized by a keenness of intellect that enables them to grasp the most difficult subjects with comparative ease, and by a zeal for the propagation of Christianity among their fellow countrymen that is equaled only by the care

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and diligence with which they prepare themselves for the glorious work.

Still more attractive and, in the opinion of many, still more productive of good is the work that is being done and that has been done in the two orphanages at Zi-ka-wei. Astronomical and seismographical research work, literary and historical studies, collegiate and seminary training are all very admirable and bear much fruit; but it is not beyond the range of possibility to regard the establishment and conduct of such institutions in the light of purely secular achievements. As a matter of fact the varied institutions which have been mentioned are not inspired by secular motives; like Jesuit institutions generally they are but means to a higher end. If the heavens are studied and the paths of the stars traced with mathematical exactness, it is with a view of attracting the students' attention to the existence of an intelligent Ruler, Who orders all things sweetly and harmoniously. If scientific observations are made, it is with the hope of leading the inquirers through nature to nature's God. An intimate acquaintance with creation is a very powerful help for the acquisition of a knowledge of the Creator. Finally, if the Jesuit missionaries devote their time and talents to the work of train-

ing young men in literature and the fine arts generally, it is with the hope of reaching the heart through the intelligence and of attuning it to the influence of Divine Love and of thus insuring the faithful observance of God's law which is the sum and substance of Christian morality.

This higher view of education is not always taken either by educators themselves, or by those who visit the educational institutions and observe their methods and their progress. In the case of orphanages, however, especially in foreign lands, it is impossible to overlook the supernatural motives that prompt the charitable work and so of all the Jesuit institutions at Zi-ka-wei the one which is of predominating interest is the orphan asylum. We shall study this institution in its origin and its present status.

Prior to the year 1864, the residence of the Jesuits at Zi-ka-wei was the center of their missionary activity in and about Shanghai. They had established there a college for the higher education of Chinese youths. Mr. Lawrence Oliphant visited this school in 1857 and tells of his impressions in the following glowing terms: "I was struck with the intelligent expression of the youths' countenances and the apparent affection they had for their teachers. Instead of

cramming nothing but texts down their throats, they teach them the Chinese classics, Confucius, etc., so as to enable them to compete in the examinations. The result is, that even if they do not become Christians, they have always gratitude enough to protect those to whom they owed their education and perhaps consequent rise in life." "At Zi-ka-wei," adds Dr. Edkins in 1858, "many of the pupils are taught the art of molding images in clay, sculpture, etc. It caused us some painful reflections to see them forming images of Joseph and Mary and other Scripture personages, in the same way that idol-makers in the neighboring towns were molding Buddhas and Gods of War and Riches, destined, too, to be honored in much the same manner. With such exceptions as this we could not help admiring the arrangements of the school, which appeared to be large and efficient."

It will be evident to any candid reader that it is not necessary to go to China for such "painful reflections," and it will be equally evident that if there was, indeed, any serious "reflection," it would do away with all unnecessary "pain." "Destined to be honored in much the same manner" is a falsehood which could be easily refuted, if refutation were needed. The

student of history will find more painful reflections in some of the other phases of the Zi-ka-wei Jesuit residence. In 1864 the Tai-Ping rebels ravaged the country about Shanghai and massacred thousands of the inhabitants. When the clouds of the rebellion had blown away, the Jesuits were forced to convert their flourishing college into a refuge for the children of the massacred parents. The Mandarins of Shanghai had gathered together 600 orphans and requested the Fathers to give them shelter in their college. As they themselves had also gathered a considerable number of these abandoned children, victims of the rebellion, they had no accommodations for the additional 600. They accordingly improvised an orphanage composed of a number of rudely constructed straw huts and were thus enabled, as far as their limited number would permit, to care for more than one thousand orphans.

The accommodations were so inadequate, the resources of the missionaries so low, the food supply so scarce, by reason of the prevalent famine consequent on the rebellion, that soon after the completion of the temporary orphanage an epidemic of typhoid broke out, which, in a very short time, decimated the children. Several of the Chinese students at Zi-ka-wei who had

devoted their time to the care of the sick children contracted the disease and died martyrs of their Christian charity. The records of the mission contain the statement that, owing to the zeal of the Christian Chinese, not a single infant died without baptism.

Such was the beginning of the Zi-ka-wei orphanage. In 1866 a new building was added to the residence at Zi-ka-wei and given over entirely to the use of orphans who at that time numbered 343. We are referring to the Jesuit orphanage only. In another article we shall speak of the orphanage for abandoned girls in charge of the Sisters known as "The Helpers of the Holy Souls." Baron de Hubner speaks very admiringly of these Religious: "By a special favor we were admitted into the boarding school which is generally closed to men. It is a large court surrounded with little rooms, where grouped according to their ages (which are from 5 to 16), these young girls receive an education suited to their position in the world. They all looked well and happy, and were simply but nicely dressed. One set, their books in their hands, were repeating their lessons out loud; others were doing needle work; and some few, magnificent embroidery."

The care of the orphans, it must be remarked,

is not the ordinary work of Jesuits, but in missionary countries, where their chief concern is to bring souls to a knowledge and love of Christian truth and to the practice of Christian morality, they avail themselves of all opportunities offered, even though they are not altogether equipped for the work by their Jesuit training. In South America the European university professors became tillers of the soil in order to win the aborigines to civilization and to God, in North America they became explorers and pathfinders; there was no reason why, in China, when the situation demanded it, they could not assume the role of fathers of the Chinese orphans.

As soon as the institution was established an appeal was made to their European brethren for volunteer workers and many responded with great alacrity to the call. Amongst the new recruits was Brother Jean Ferrer, an artist of some note. He had manifested in his youth, a rare talent as an artist and when about twenty-five years of age he went from Spain, his native country, to pursue his studies under the direction of the master artists in the Eternal City. While there he learned the need of the Zi-ka-wei orphanage and, with a generosity as admirable as it was self-sacrificing, he offered

himself to the Jesuit superiors, requesting, at the same time, that he be sent to China. He was admitted into the order and according to request sent, at the completion of his novitiate, to Zi-ka-wei.

Under the wise direction of this devoted and capable Brother, the Zi-ka-wei orphanage was enlarged by the addition of a technical school where many useful trades were taught to the boys of more advanced years. Chief amongst these trades which the boys had an opportunity to learn were painting, varnishing, weaving, wood-carving, etc. In 1867 a school of agriculture was opened but it had to be abandoned in its infancy because it was impossible to secure the necessary land.

It is chiefly the technical work done at Zi-ka-wei that has attracted the attention of visitors, many of whom have spoken in the highest terms of the devotedness of the teachers and of the docility and efficiency of the pupils. In 1871 Baron de Hubner visited the orphanage and tells us that "the scholars pass through a course of classical studies in the Chinese sense and learn every kind of useful knowledge. The orphans are taught all sorts of trades. Each of these young men, on returning to his family, will bring back with him the germs of a new

civilization. Everybody, Fathers and students, seemed gay and happy and in good health. The superior would not let us go without having improvised a little concert. Under the direction of a Chinese Father four of the students began to play a symphony of Haydn's. The reverend director of the orchestra, with a huge pair of spectacles on his nose, directed, cheered, and with baton and eye kept time and guided these juvenile virtuosi, who, fixing their little eyes on the music and perspiring from every pore, managed to perform very satisfactorily one of the finest compositions of this great master. Haydn performed in China, and by Chinese! Why be ashamed to own it? We were all greatly touched and pleased."

In 1872 we learn from H. M. Consul at Shanghai that the "Romanist missionaries . . . rely mainly upon educational means for securing adherents, and although the process must necessarily be a slow one, yet the results, when these come to exhibit themselves, are certainly more satisfactory as regards the number and permanency of the conversions."

In 1874, M. Piassetsky visited the Jesuit establishment in Shanghai. He gives his impression in the following words: "One of the Fathers came to meet us, and offered to show

us over the establishment, which is as useful as it is interesting. It takes in foundlings, orphan children of all ages, from new-born babes to those nearly grown up, and has been established for some years. Apart from Chinese they also teach French and Latin, besides a general notion of other subjects, but principally philosophy and theology. Neither are trades and the arts by any means neglected. We were shown the carpenter's, locksmith's, and shoemaker's workshops, and the studio for painting and wood-carving, the last entirely devoted to religious subjects, intended for the Chinese churches and their members. . . . The reverend Father conducted us to the observatory, where he showed us a rather complicated instrument. I confess to never having heard of the meteorograph of Father Angelo Secchi."

The system of instruction does not terminate with the students' life at the orphanage; it includes the after career of the boys. The dangers to faith and morals which the young men have to face when they leave the orphanage are provided against in many ways. In the first place a contract is demanded of the employer by which he pledges himself not to interfere with the Christian religion of the boys and to permit them to return several times a

year for reunions at Zi-ka-wei. These reunions are fruitful of much good, both from a social and religious point of view. The students thus cultivate life-long friendships with those of their own class and become more and more attached to their Alma Mater. There is in fact, at present, a little village in the neighborhood of the orphanage made up exclusively of "old boys" and their families, all of whom are devout Catholics.

The success of the Fathers, which is universally conceded, is all the more admirable when one considers that nearly all of the orphans at Zi-ka-wei are of the class of those who, abandoned by unnatural parents, are picked up by the roadside or purchased at low price, or, in some instances, saved from the inhuman practice of infanticide, prevalent in China. "A law exists in the statute book," says Sir Robert Douglas, "making infanticide a crime, but, as a matter of fact, it is never acted upon; and in some parts of the country, more especially in the Provinces of Keang-se and Fuh-Kien, this most unnatural offense prevails amongst the poorer classes to an alarming extent. Not only do the people acknowledge the existence of the practice, but even go to the length of defending it. 'What,' they say, 'is the good of rearing

daughters? When they are young they are only an expense, and when they reach an age when they might be able to earn a living, they marry and leave us?' Periodically the mandarins inveigh against the inhumanity of the offense, and appeal to the better instincts of the people to put a stop to it, but a stone which stands near a pool outside the city of Foo-chow bearing the inscription, 'Girls may not be drowned here,' testifies with terrible emphasis to the futility of their praiseworthy endeavors."

The number of the infants rescued from death may be gathered from what Miss Field tells us regarding the condition of affairs in Peking. "A Roman Catholic priest," she writes, "who had lived twenty-one years in Peking told me that during the year 1882 seven hundred little cast-away girls had been gathered up alive from the ruts and pits of the street and brought in by the messengers sent out on such service from the Roman Catholic Foundling Asylum of that city; and that during the previous ten years over eight thousand infants had been thus found and sheltered by the same institution."

These facts are mentioned because they indicate the difficulties that have to be surmounted in educating these children who inherit a physical and moral weakness from their inhuman

parents. The difficulties are surmounted, however, and the boys trained in the orphanage are not only a credit to the institution but an honor to the Chinese Republic.

Somewhat humble, in its origin, as we have seen, and laboring under immense disadvantages in its work by reason of the material supplied for the building of Christian manhood, the Zi-ka-wei orphanage has grown and prospered and may at the present time be more appropriately described as a technical school of the very highest efficiency.

There is, among other admirable features, a large printing plant, where the boys are taught typesetting, presswork, engraving, lithographing, and all the allied trades. Many books in Chinese as well as in the European languages issue from the Zi-ka-wei press. There are, moreover, two magazines, both of them in the Chinese language, "The Catholic Review," a bi-weekly, and "The Messenger of the Sacred Heart." They number more than 8,000 subscribers and are of wonderful influence in spreading the knowledge of Christian truth.

Woodcarving is given special attention, not only because the Chinese have a native talent for this kind of work, but also because it is admirably suited for religious purposes. The

statues, carved at Zi-ka-wei, some of them in massive proportions and all of them executed with extreme delicacy and unusual taste, may be found in nearly all of the churches of China. The statues that have been sent to the Panama-Pacific International Exposition, notably those of St. Francis of Assisi, the Curé d'Ars and the Virgin Mary, have been universally regarded as works of art. Not only are the lines of exceptional beauty but the expression, the poise, the detail, the proportions are such as to entitle the statues to a niche in the Palace of Fine Arts. The material chosen for the statues is exclusively Chinese. Other nations delight in bronze or Carrara marble, and the result is oftentimes fascinating; the Chinese have sent us their carvings in teakwood and while it may be said of teakwood, that it is "more enduring than bronze," the chief point of interest seems to be that to the orphans of Zi-ka-wei belongs the unique honor of having added a new page to the history of Christian art. For centuries the teakwood of the Orient was used for statuary representing pagan deities; now it is formed into the likenesses of Christ and His saints.

Nor are religious statues the exclusive work of the Zi-ka-wei orphans. Recognizing the historic value of Chinese traditions and the need

of perpetuating a memory of the wonderful past, they devote their skill and talents to statues of Confucius, Buddha, Chinese warriors and kings with as much pleasure and artistic nicety as to those of Christian heroes. The warrior kings on exhibit at the Exposition have been carved in solid blocks of teakwood. They are reproductions of statues originally found on the pagoda Yuenping-hsien, which was built in the fourteenth century. These ancient statues present a striking contrast to the Christian subjects. It is almost like a study in comparative religion to pass from the contemplation of one of the warriors with drawn sword or menacing spear to the prayerful countenance and humble posture of Francis of Assisi. Perhaps the contrast, so eloquent in the suggestion of the beauties of genuine Christianity, is the explanation of what might otherwise astonish some hypercritical observer, that the Christian youths are taught to carve images of non-Christian gods and demi-gods.

A special pamphlet is in preparation which will be devoted exclusively to the subject of Chinese Pagodas. A few words, however, on this feature of the Zi-ka-wei achievements will not be out of place here.

Brother Beck, S.J., who is at the present time

the director of the woodcarving department of the orphanage, conceived the idea of restoring, in exact detail, though of course, in miniature, all of the celebrated pagodas of the Chinese Empire. It was, in most cases, a strict restoration because many of these monuments of Chinese architecture, which has of recent years attracted the admiration of the world, are in a crumbling condition and hence an intricate study of ancient documents and present-day ruins was necessary. For years the work was carried on and the Zi-ka-wei woodcarvers have presented to the world, nearly every Pagoda in its original artistic and architectural splendor. Seventy-two in all, they may be seen at the Panama-Pacific International Exposition.

Those who merely pass through the buildings in search of something exciting will be forced to pause and admire the miniature structures, but the student of history and of art will not stop at mere admiration; he will recognize in the Pagoda collection one of the most remarkable educational exhibits in the entire Exposition. It is educational in more senses than one; it shows the manual training of the Zi-ka-wei orphans, the research work of Brother Beck, S.J., which ranks, in the opinion of some, with

the work of Roman or even Babylonian archeologists; and finally it tells more plainly and more eloquently than many books can tell, what wonderful builders the Chinese of ancient times really were, what an eye to detail and to symmetric proportion they possessed, what skill in execution, and what reverence they had for the religion of the country.

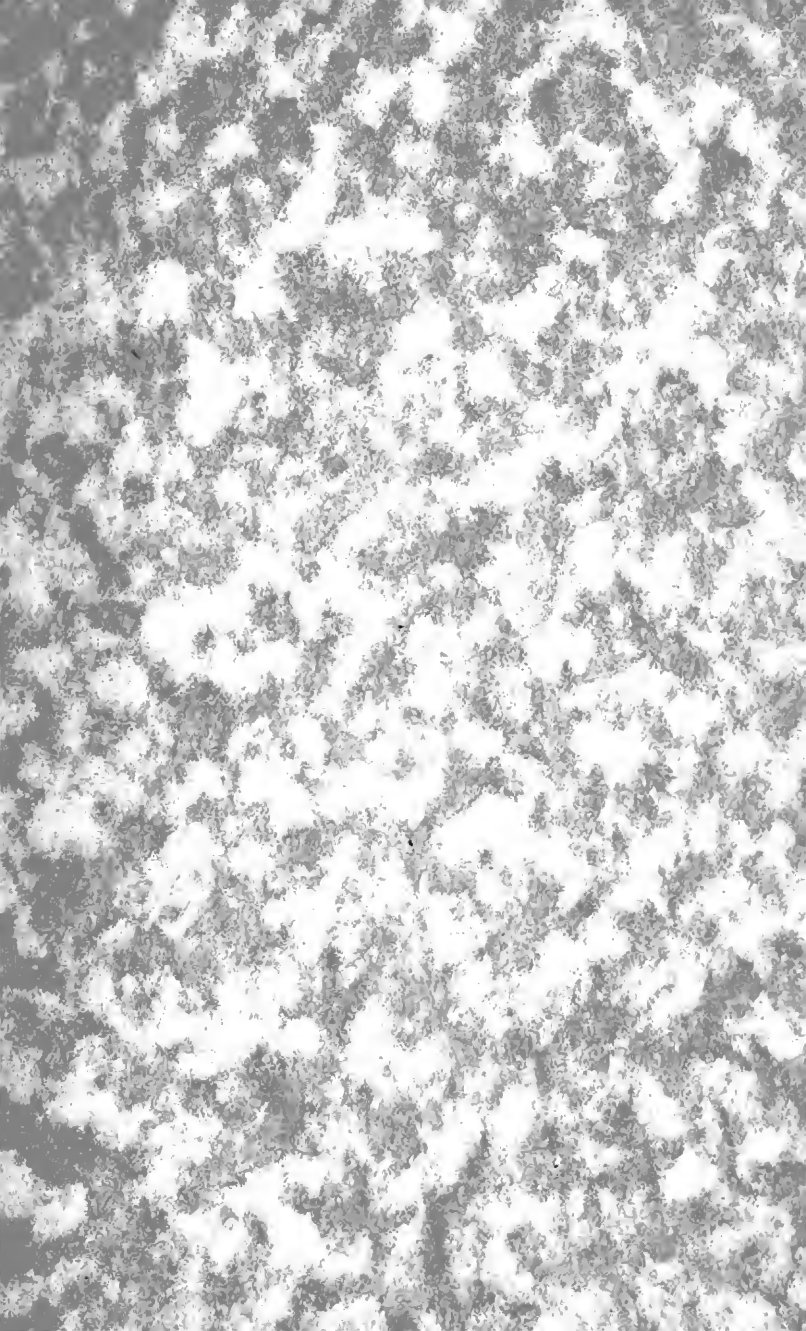
Artistic painting is another pastime of the Zi-ka-wei orphans, as interesting as it is profitable. In their painting as in their woodcarving one will notice a mixture of Christian and Chinese subjects. St. Anthony and St. Francis here, Buddha and Confucius there. The Madonna with the little Chinese-featured Child on one side and the monstrous Oriental dragon on the other. At the Exposition the pictures on display are predominantly Christian and for the most part, reproductions of famous masterpieces, but they are artistic reproductions and manifest a skill all the more admirable when it is remembered that the young artists are mere boys.

Furniture-making is another trade taught at Zi-ka-wei. That it is taught with consummate thoroughness, no one, who visits the exhibit can for a moment doubt. Dining sets, parlor sets,

desks, camphor boxes, teakwood chests, sideboards, hand carved screens, Chinese sofas, etc.,—all manifest a skill and taste above par.

Of other trades taught we need not speak. Sufficient has been said to indicate the nature of the work accomplished. The Chinese in general, always grateful and appreciative, regard the Zi-ka-wei institutions with great favor. Tourists speak in the highest terms of its achievements, while the boys who are trained there, those of the college as well as those of the orphanage, make it a solemn duty to spread the good name of their Alma Mater throughout the Chinese Republic, chiefly by the admirable example of their Christian lives.





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